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General Assembly

Sixtieth session

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Friday, 23 September 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Adnan Terzić, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Adnan Terzić, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, His Excellency Mr. Adnan Terzić, and in inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Terzić (Bosnia and Herzegovina) (*spoke in Bosnian; interpretation was provided in English*): At the outset, allow me to express my great pleasure in attending this sixtieth session of the General Assembly and in addressing you on behalf of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I should also like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election and at the same time to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Jean Ping for his successful presiding over the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Let me start by making reference to the historic summit that took place last week. In its sixtieth year of striving for global peace, the United Nations has reached maturity. Our planet is not what it was 60 years ago, and we will leave it to historians to say whether our generation is better than earlier generations.

We need to be able to face the challenges of globalization in the twenty-first century armed with capacity and competence. We need to show multilateralism and cooperation, relying on the basic values outlined in the Charter. Above all, we need to identify explicit obligations and ensure that they are fulfilled. The United Nations, unique and uncontested when it comes to global credibility and capacity, should not be content to be simply what it used to be. This Organization needs to be reformed, not only to quiet the criticism but also more importantly to earn unequivocal respect.

The strength and efficiency of the United Nations, like in any other organization, depend on the collective strength of its Members. Its strength stems from the unity of the Member States. Our Organization, as imperfect as it is, reflects today's world, the international community and our entire generation. The High-level Plenary Meeting's outcome document is encouraging because it summarizes the issues on which we reached consensus, but it has fallen short of providing the timeframe and methods for achieving important goals.

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It is a pity that reform of the Security Council has lost momentum and has been postponed to the future. Our enthusiasm in supporting the establishment of the Human Rights Council was overshadowed by the fact that the final document has not defined the modalities for realizing this idea in a precise timeframe. We strongly urge the appointment of a facilitator who will streamline the General Assembly's efforts to see this newborn get on its feet.

As for the responsibility to protect, which found its rightful place in the outcome document, we would like to point out the paramount role of preventive diplomacy. From our painful experience we have come to realize the importance of fact-finding missions and early warning systems for potential or imminent conflicts.

In order to have efficient early warning, we need to strengthen the Secretariat's Department of Political Affairs. Staff from countries emerging from conflict or from post-conflict societies, staff with first-hand experience could be an asset to that Department. That would allow us to restore the credibility of the United Nations, which was in great part overshadowed by non-government organizations such as the International Crisis Group.

Having travelled the path from being the subject of Security Council emergency meetings to being a potential candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council in 2010-2011, Bosnia and Herzegovina strongly supports the outcome document's conclusion that the Council should stay committed to its primary responsibility under the Charter and maintain international peace and security, rather than expand its agenda at the expense of the General Assembly.

Another of today's serious challenges, one that Bosnia and Herzegovina is dealing with quite successfully, is the war on terrorism. It is certain that a global threat requires a global response, and that is possible only through the United Nations. The definition of terrorist acts, the unequivocal condemnation of such acts by the international community, the identification of means of international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and the unhindered functioning of international justice can be achieved only through the United Nations. A special Ministry for Security has been established in Bosnia and Herzegovina, aimed not only at improving domestic security but also at contributing more effectively to the global fight against terrorism. The anti-terrorist team that operates under this Ministry has already blocked the bank accounts of suspect individuals and organizations and has brought a number of charges. We have signed all the international conventions against terrorism, and we stand ready to make a constructive contribution to the drafting the United Nations Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism, as agreed in the outcome document.

The summit's accomplishments are quite encouraging, demonstrating the power of universalism and multilateralism and their superiority over unilateralism. We made this Assembly an arena of agreement, instead of an arena of conflict. The lesson learned in Bosnia and Herzegovina has taught us that if we find enough strength and courage in ourselves to prove our commitment to these principles in practice, the course of history can be changed towards peace, stability and prosperity for all.

With no intention to go too far into the past or interpret facts that already belong to the archives, I must remind you that we are marking two anniversaries this year: Srebrenica and Dayton. The close to 8,000 names of Bosniacs on the list in the Srebrenica report confirm the terrible truth about the genocide that took place in that city. That crime was committed 50 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, when it was vowed that that would never again happen. Yet it happened again: not once but twice. We now have the power and instruments to prevent anything similar from ever happening again.

The Dayton Agreement, the peace agreement that was reached in Dayton and signed in Paris and often criticized for its complicated and unfeasible provisions, did stop the war and enabled freedom of movement. It meant a new beginning for Bosnia and Herzegovina. However imperfect, it provided the framework that enabled us, 10 years down the line, to turn the situation around and complete fundamental reforms that have become part of our everyday life, namely, the creation of a single defence system with a Ministry of Defence, the unification of two economic spaces, the merger of two intelligence services, a single Customs service and revenue system, standardization, to mention but a few.

Obvious limitations imposed by the Dayton framework, for example the problems faced in police reform, will be dealt with in accordance with

international standards, just as we did with defence reform. International standards and good democratic practices will take us to the future, free of fear and tension. We believe that the road that Bosnia and Herzegovina is resolutely following provides an important international experience. Peace is now firm and the State reintegrated, as the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina clearly shows.

We have done more in terms of integration and nation building over the past three years than in the previous seven. I would like to bring to your attention the important fact that the international affirmation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and fulfilment of our obligations are interconnected. There is a correlation between encouragement and obligations on the one side and multiple reforms on the other.

A key feature of all reforms to date is the fact that they have all been implemented through political agreement. They were not a result of international pressure and they were not imposed by the current High Representative. Entities have agreed to transfer their jurisdictions to the State. Establishing and running the State-level Ministry of Defence was a crucial step forward in terms of NATO's Partnership for Peace programme. Numerous institutions and agencies in the field of public health now operate with State-level mandates as well. We are in the final phases of introducing a single-rate value-added tax in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which will strengthen and accommodate the business environment for foreign investment. We have recorded continued growth in foreign direct investment over the past two years, whereas growth in the gross domestic product for 2004 was almost 6 per cent — a record for our region.

Of course, one of our most important international obligations is cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and we pay a great deal of attention to it. Despite the fact that the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina has also made substantial progress in this area this year, we are discouraged by the fact that the two most wanted war criminals have not yet been brought to justice. Obvious improvement in cooperation with The Hague, sudden voluntary surrenders to the Tribunal after years of hiding and the locations from which runaway criminals are being extradited clearly point to the level of responsibility of Serbia and Montenegro with regard to this entire matter, especially as compared to the responsibility of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are extremely concerned by the fact that many criminals still at large have obviously used Belgrade as an escape route and to secure hideouts outside the region.

The reform of the justice system has resulted in the establishment of the institutions of State Prosecutor, the National Court and the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are the first country in the region to meet the international standards required for the processing of war crimes cases. The State-level Council will operate under optimal technical conditions and in accordance with the best European practices.

The process of organizing trials in the countries where crimes have been committed is somewhat hindered by the dual citizenship issue. However, we hope to have that matter resolved shortly, with the assistance of the relevant international institutions.

Acting in accordance with its international obligations, Bosnia and Herzegovina supports all activities and peace initiatives aimed at conflict prevention, peacebuilding and safety in post-conflict zones. Despite our limited capacities, Bosnia and Herzegovina participates in international peacekeeping operations. We have military observers in Congo, Cyprus, Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as civilian police officers in Liberia and Haiti as part of United Nations operations there. We also sent a mine-clearance team to Iraq as a sign of our support for Iraqis in the process of establishing a democratic State.

With regard to the situation in Iraq, we are pleased to see consensus among members of the Security Council in connection with the transfer of authority from the occupation forces to the legitimately elected judicial and executive authorities, as that will led to establishing Iraq as a sovereign and democratic country. That is a necessary precondition for the beginning of comprehensive reforms of the Iraqi State and society.

Reconstruction will still remain the key issue for Iraq's citizens. The United Nations should play a more important role in that connection. The Organization provides humanitarian aid to Iraq and is helping to rebuild its infrastructure and Government institutions. The firm determination of the Members of the United Nations to assist in establishing stability and security by participating in reconstruction and providing

assistance in the form of human resources or technical support is vital.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Bosnia and Herzegovina supports the comprehensive implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We have also supported the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to AIDS by creating a special national council for the prevention of AIDS. The council will meet all required international obligations in that area by the end of this year.

With regard to the financing of international peacekeeping operations, we are quite aware that that issue is key to accomplishing the goals of the United Nations. We also recognize that a shortfall in funds can indeed hinder the protection of human lives. We call for a more balanced and fair basis for contributions. We also call upon developed countries to set a good example for other countries as they need to demonstrate clearly that we all share this obligation.

Being an underrepresented country at United Nations Headquarters, and in the United Nations system overall, we would like to see more balanced representation. Bosnia and Herzegovina is keen to see its nationals being selected for high-ranking positions in the Organization, as we in fact have high-quality personnel to offer.

On behalf of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, allow me to take this opportunity to once again express the gratitude that we feel for the assistance that the international community has provided us during times of hardship.

The Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina will take immediate steps to prepare, by the end of next year, a national strategy to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. That strategy will include special emphasis on transparency, good governance, better employment and better use of domestic resources.

Lastly, allow me to share a final thought. We believe that helping underdeveloped countries and post-conflict societies is not charity, but rather an investment in the future of the entire world.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Elvin Nimrod, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade, Legal Affairs and Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs of Grenada.

Mr. Nimrod (Grenada): I am indeed greatly honoured to join those who preceded me in congratulating the President on his election to the presidency of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. I assure him of Grenada's support as he guides the deliberations during this historic year towards the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security. My delegation would also like to express its appreciation to Mr. Jean Ping, who laboured assiduously during his presidency of the fifty-ninth session, for his tireless efforts in guiding the preparatory work for the High-level Plenary Meeting. In addition, Grenada commends the Secretary-General for his energetic pursuit of change at the United Nations. We subscribe to the Secretary-General's view that the world cannot be a safer place without development and poverty eradication.

Permit me, at this juncture, to extend, on behalf of the Government and people of Grenada, empathy and profound sympathy to the Government and people of the United States of America, particularly those of the Gulf states, for the loss of life and severe destruction of property suffered as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

When the Millennium Declaration was adopted, many viewed it as a landmark document containing the blueprint for the eradication of poverty and as a vehicle to transform the condition of humankind in the twenty-first century. While it did not take on the momentum that we had hoped for, we have now moved to review its implementation. This year, the outcome document adopted by heads of State and Government at the conclusion of the High-level Plenary Meeting gives us another chance to address in earnest the commitments that were made in the Millennium Declaration and at major United Nations conferences.

Grenada is heartened by the recent renewal of commitment to development and security, including poverty eradication and the endorsement to positively transform the world for the betterment of our peoples. We also welcome the efforts made to address the special needs of Africa. Those are high ideals, but we are convinced that peace, security and prosperity can only be achieved globally with the commitment,

sacrifice and concerted, cooperative efforts of all Member States.

We welcome the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission to ensure post-conflict recovery where it is most needed, and especially to focus on issues relating to women and children within that process. Grenada also supports the strengthening of the human rights machinery through the creation of a Human Rights Council, and we resolve to participate in the negotiations to establish a working mandate for that body during the sixtieth session of the Assembly.

Grenada welcomes the outcome document's strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We regret, however, that there has been no meaningful progress on the issue of disarmament and non-proliferation and call for continued negotiations in that regard.

Reform is vital in order for this unique Organization to reflect the aspirations of its 191 Member States. It is extremely important that the United Nations address the burning issues and realities that preoccupy the global community. Grenada fully supports the measures called for in the Secretary-General's report, "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), and remains convinced of the usefulness of addressing peace and security on a broad spectrum.

Grenada agrees that Security Council reform is imperative. The Council must be expanded in a manner that will convince every region of the world that they have an active voice in one of the most important and powerful organs of the United Nations.

Grenada, like the other countries of the English-speaking Caribbean, places a high priority on the reorganization of the Economic and Social Council. The Charter clearly designed the Economic and Social Council to address development. In the twenty-first century, therefore, the Economic and Social Council must have, as the outcome document states, a more focused agenda built around the major themes contained in the Millennium Declaration.

The theme for this year's deliberations is well chosen and we accept the challenge to work towards that goal. Grenada hopes that United Nations reform and the implementation of the goals set out in the outcome document will come to fruition soon, in order to ensure a stronger Organization and a more just world.

My country, Grenada, knows quite well the challenges faced by developing countries. In less than one year Grenada experienced two hurricanes, causing infrastructural damage amounting to 250 per cent of our gross domestic product (GDP), crippling the tourism sector, increasing unemployment to 31 per cent and having an immeasurable psychological and social impact on our population.

Prior to those events, Grenada was well on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of universal primary education, lowering child mortality rates, and reducing the poverty rate by half. Also high on our country's agenda was the implementation of policies to combat diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Today, even with the most rigorous national efforts, if Grenada is to achieve the MDGs, it can only do so with substantial financial and technical assistance.

Currently, countries of the Caribbean face growing unemployment and poverty because of the recent World Trade Organization ruling that resulted in the removal of preferential arrangements that once facilitated our trade. As a direct result, two of the industries most vital to the Caribbean — bananas and sugar — are rapidly declining, sending thousands to the bread line and abject poverty. Here, I would refer to the statement made yesterday by the Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, which confirmed the effects that the demise of the sugar industry is having on his country.

Countries of the Caribbean require more than just aid; for aid alone cannot eradicate poverty. What Caribbean countries desire most fervently are trading opportunities. We crave opportunities that will recognize the diversities and disparities in the economic world. Given our disadvantageous economies of scale, our limited land mass and our late admission into the international economic order, it is impossible to make progress without special concessions.

Grenada has no desire to see its future generations become mendicants, seized by poverty and a lack of opportunities. The MDGs, as well as United Nations declarations, constitute a global partnership for development. Both the developed and developing countries are called upon to implement changes and adjust their modus operandi to advance a more secure and just world.

We applaud the European Union for its decision to increase its overseas development assistance to the recommended 0.7 per cent of their GDP. However, we urge them and other developed countries to continue to provide freedom in trade with developing countries, in order to facilitate the transfer of technology and to assist with our environmental protection.

Those of us in the developing world have also given our commitment to devise national policies to improve the standard of living of our people, promote education, practice good governance and strive for better health care for all. That, however, is virtually impossible in the current international economic climate, as some international regimes seem committed to crippling the economies of developing countries, in particular those of the Caribbean.

Hurricanes and other natural disasters add to the Caribbean region's challenges and remain a very real and formidable enemy. Grenada acknowledges that natural disasters are unavoidable phenomena that cannot be stopped. However, we can mitigate their effects, ease human suffering with sound measures and speed up recovery by designing mechanisms conducive to quick responses, particularly from the international community. From hurricanes to tsunamis, from floods to droughts, we have come to realize that natural disasters know no boundaries and do not differentiate between developed and developing countries. In the light of scientific predictions that indicate an increase in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters, we must address this matter and give disaster mitigation a high priority on our agenda.

I recall that during his address to the Millennium Summit five years ago, the Prime Minister of Grenada, the Right Honourable Keith Mitchell, joined his colleagues in making a clarion call for the establishment of a disaster relief fund to facilitate quick responses to aid victims of hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanoes and other natural disasters that strike us with such frequency and ferocity. I wish to reiterate that call today in light of the realities that now surround us.

Some countries, particularly small island developing States, are extremely vulnerable and can experience a complete reversal of economic, social, cultural and infrastructural progress with the passage of one natural disaster, as was evident when Grenada was struck by Hurricane Ivan in September of 2004. For small islands it is exceedingly difficult to stop the downward spiral that disasters can cause. Generally, recovery is virtually impossible without major international assistance.

Grenada welcomes the reference made to the vulnerabilities of small island developing States. We look forward to the effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in the very near future. Grenada implores Member States to support the call of small island developing States for special recognition of their vulnerabilities.

In the same vein, I turn now to the issue of the Caribbean Sea. Our economies derive tremendous benefits from the resources of the Caribbean Sea. In fact, the annual estimate of the economic value to Grenada of production from the sea is more than 30 million Eastern Caribbean dollars. That is a contribution that we as a people strongly feel must be conserved, preserved, maintained and protected, not merely for this generation, but for future generations.

I would like specifically to refer to the trans-shipment of radioactive materials through our waters, which continues to pose a tremendous threat to the human health, marine life, ecosystems, tourism and economies of the region. As has been repeatedly affirmed by Grenada and other Caribbean Community member States, that practice must stop. Grenada once again calls on those concerned to desist from such activity. We welcome the reference made in the outcome document in that regard, and further urge the international community to be more cognizant of the situation and its impact on our economies and our peoples. Since this matter is of grave importance to the Caribbean region, we will continue our efforts to have the Caribbean Sea designated as a Special Area in the context of sustainable development.

Finally, judging from the commitments made over the past few days, it is clearly evident that Member States are willing to take up the challenge to implement the necessary reforms to strengthen this body. We too pledge our full support to that process, despite the bleak economic realities we currently face.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency The Honourable Knowlson Gift, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Gift (Trinidad and Tobago): It is an honour for me to extend to His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson my sincere congratulations on his election to the presidency of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. Let me also pay tribute to his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, for his extraordinary dedication and leadership during the fifty-ninth session. I also wish to express my Government's sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless efforts aimed at strengthening multilateralism and upholding the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Five years ago, at the Millennium Summit, world leaders reaffirmed their faith in the United Nations and its Charter as indispensable foundations of a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. While there has been progress in some areas, much remains to be done to bring about the full realization of the ambitious Goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration.

The promise of a global partnership to realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) remains unfulfilled for the vast majority of the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, where a total of more than one billion people still live below the poverty line. For the Caribbean region in particular challenges remain in the area of trade, where the erosion of tariff preferences for primary commodities such as bananas and sugar have been extremely prejudicial to the socio-economic development of many countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

The Caribbean region has also been affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has killed over 20 million men, women and children worldwide. The implicit threat to economic and social stability, human development and security cannot be underestimated or denied.

The target of devoting 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance (ODA) also remains an elusive goal, although there have been encouraging signs recently, such as the commitment made by the Group of Eight (G-8) at the Gleneagles summit and the commitments of other developed countries to meet that target by the year 2015. Those commitments were reiterated in the 2005 outcome document (resolution 60/1) of the High-level Plenary Meeting.

At the same time, we have been increasingly confronted by humanitarian emergencies caused by devastating natural disasters, with the resultant internal displacement of people. Once again, we wish to express our sympathy to the Government and the people of the United States of America in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. In our own CARICOM subregion, we remain particularly vulnerable to the devastating effects of hurricanes. In the light of the extensive damage inflicted on the sister island of Grenada last year, we urge the United Nations, the international community and donor agencies to give priority attention to the CARICOM subregion in the areas of disaster preparedness and post-recovery assistance.

The rise of global terrorism, the threat of the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and the concomitant prospect of them falling into the hands of non-State actors have emerged as issues of extreme urgency. The spread of small arms and light weapons — the weapons of choice in many intra-State conflicts — also poses a threat to the security of many countries. In that regard, CARICOM is particularly concerned about the increasing incidence of violent crime caused by the presence of illegal firearms and their association with the illicit drug trade.

The confluence of all those interconnected threats and challenges, as daunting as this may seem, can and must be countered and effectively addressed. We must therefore demonstrate the political will and the commitment to act collectively to develop national and regional strategies with renewed resolve at the global level to support robust multilateralism, with a strong and effective United Nations at its centre. No one State, no matter how powerful, can act wholly by itself to resolve those common problems. There is also simply no legitimate alternative to the United Nations — no comparable multilateral institution where all member States meet, deliberate, advance and harmonize their views and interests and negotiate and adopt instruments for collective action to the benefit of all.

Last week, in adopting the outcome document, we agreed to a road map, as it were, of measures required to reorient the United Nations to meet today's challenges. Even as we reaffirm our faith in the United Nations and our commitment to more robust multilateralism, and even as we work towards a more effective United Nations through the implementation of

the outcome document, we must recall that the main purpose of last week's Meeting was to review the progress made since the Millennium Summit adopted the MDGs, five years ago. Indeed, it is the overall improvement in the lives of all our peoples, in whose name we are gathered here, by which history will ultimately judge or condemn us. Permit me, therefore, to offer some views on issues that Trinidad and Tobago considers paramount, and on the principles that should serve as a guide for our future deliberations.

Those must of necessity include the following: the imperative of recommitting ourselves, as a matter of priority, to the full realization of the development goals and objectives that have emerged from major United Nations conferences and summits, including the MDGs; greater democratization of all United Nations organs and related bodies, in terms of both their composition and their mode of operations; strict observance of the rule of international law and justice; and respect for the commonly shared values on which the United Nations is founded.

Development must remain central to the agenda of the United Nations.

Trinidad and Tobago supports the increased attention of the international community towards Africa in overcoming its developmental challenges and in providing that continent with the increased resources needed to enable it to fully implement the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

We welcome in particular the commitment contained in the outcome document to the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. We call for the full and effective implementation of the commitments, programmes and targets contained in the Mauritius Strategy, adopted at the International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island States.

Trinidad and Tobago has demonstrated remarkable strength and resilience in the face of a global environment characterized by rapid economic, social and other changes. We have embarked on the road to developed-nation status and hope to reach our goal by the year 2020 or earlier.

Our Vision 20/20 includes the evolution of a technologically driven, knowledge-based society, a highly productive and globally competitive economy, and the provision of a standard of living comparable to that of the developed world. To achieve that vision, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago is developing its human capital by creating a virtually seamless educational system from the primary to the tertiary level, with increasing emphasis on information technology and other related subjects. In this way we will ensure that our young people can become an integral part of the global labour force, with the necessary skills to compete locally, regionally and internationally.

Our development agenda is not centred solely on the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It is, as my Prime Minister stated from this very rostrum one year ago, "part and parcel of a pan-Caribbean agenda to which we are irrevocably and solidly committed ... [and in which the] development of Trinidad and Tobago and CARICOM are intertwined". (*A/59/PV.10, p. 8*)

We therefore remain committed to the integration of the Caribbean region through the instrumentality of CARICOM. To that end, Trinidad and Tobago has provided substantial financial and economic assistance to our CARICOM neighbours through a variety of mechanisms, including capital market activities, direct foreign investment, debt relief and direct bilateral assistance. We have also provided extensive hurricane relief as well as assistance to the private sector in CARICOM to strengthen their export capability.

As an energy surplus country, Trinidad and Tobago has, through its own Petroleum Stabilization Fund, made financial assistance available to CARICOM countries to the tune of some $48 million per annum -- and this without any conditionalities.

No development or security assessment in our subregion would be complete without consideration of the grave political, economic, social and security crisis that confronts the Haitian people. We look forward to the holding of free, fair, democratic and inclusive elections in Haiti and to the installation of a truly democratically elected Government in that nation, so that Haiti can once again sit in the Council of CARICOM.

Trinidad and Tobago and other CARICOM States remain committed over the long term to securing the

progress and future of the Haitian people. We therefore urge the United Nations system and the international donor community to provide the necessary support to Haiti in the post-election period. Effective assistance, the disbursement of funds pledged and the release of other resources will ensure the progress of a nation currently overwhelmed by daunting challenges.

In the area of disarmament, we share the disappointment of many Member States at our failure to demonstrate the necessary political will to ensure the consensus adoption of agreements leading to tangible and substantive results at the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and in the outcome document.

Trinidad and Tobago reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and it is committed to doing its part to eradicate that scourge from our world. In that vein, we look forward to the early conclusion of a draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

In addition, we welcome the action taken by members of the international community to combat terrorism, but we would wish to reiterate that the human rights and the civil and political rights of individuals must be respected in the course of any counter-terrorism actions taken by Member States of the international community.

As a small island developing State, we face difficulties associated with the evils of the drug trade and the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult to stem the tide of criminal activity within our society.

Trinidad and Tobago believes that an international order based on the rule of law must be observed in relations between and among States. This fundamental pillar is indispensable for the proper functioning of the international system. In their relations, States must have regard, at all times, for the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law.

We reaffirm in particular those principles relating to the sovereign equality of all States Members of the United Nations, non-interference in the internal affairs of Members, respect for their political and territorial integrity, the right of peoples to self-determination, and recourse to peaceful means for the settlement of disputes.

We also reaffirm the important role of the General Assembly in the development of international treaties.

Trinidad and Tobago expresses its deep regret at the failure of the outcome document to include any reference to the International Criminal Court or the question of impunity. In that regard, we call on all States Members of the United Nations to become parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in order to ensure that it becomes a truly global instrument for the trial of those accused of committing crimes that affront the conscience of all humanity.

My country welcomes the cooperation between the International Criminal Court and the United Nations, which was highlighted earlier this year when the Security Council decided to refer the situation in Darfur to the Court. We look forward to increased opportunities for collaboration and cooperation between these two important global institutions in putting an end to such crimes and to the culture of impunity that has for so long accompanied them.

Trinidad and Tobago reaffirms its commitment to the reform and strengthening of the United Nations. We share the view that the reform of the United Nations must seek to reinforce and consolidate the democratic foundation upon which this Organization was built.

We are of the view that cardinal to the reform agenda must be the revitalization and restoration of the role and authority of the General Assembly, as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.

Trinidad and Tobago supports the comprehensive reform of the Security Council. In that regard, we wish to underline the importance of the adoption by the international community of a comprehensive set of reform measures. It is imperative that expansion should proceed on the basis of making the Council more representative of the general membership of the United Nations. It should contribute to a greater democratization of its functioning. It should impart greater legitimacy and transparency to its decisions, and it should be achieved through the broadest possible consultation.

Trinidad and Tobago also looks forward to participating in discussions on reform of the United

Nations human rights machinery and on the pending issues relating to the Peacebuilding Commission.

Trinidad and Tobago commends the Secretary-General for his ongoing efforts to enhance the effective management of the United Nations. An efficient, effective, well-resourced Secretariat which is accountable to the General Assembly is indispensable to achieving the objectives of a strengthened Organization.

Trinidad and Tobago welcomes the Secretariat and management reform proposals contained in the outcome document as a first step towards a necessary thorough debate and discussion, and we look forward to participating actively in these negotiations.

It is imperative, however, that these proposals meet the test of viability, that they have the sanction of the established intergovernmental process and that they do not individually or collectively seek to derogate, diminish or further marginalize the role of the General Assembly.

As we embark on the path of implementation of the outcome document, we must spare no effort to ensure that the future of the United Nations is not compromised by the exigencies of the moment. Institutional renewal, a strengthened United Nations and a robust multilateralism must allow us to forge a truly effective global response and commitment to the common threats and challenges that confront us.

Trinidad and Tobago pledges to do its part to make the United Nations a more effective instrument in the common service of all our peoples.

The President returned to the Chair.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jan Petersen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway.

Mr. Petersen (Norway): I, too, congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session.

Sixty years ago, the United Nations rose out of the ashes of the Second World War. The creation of our Organization was the fulfilment of people's hopes for a better and safer future. Norway was honoured to provide the United Nations with its first Secretary-General, Trygve Lie.

Last week, we saw agreement on a summit outcome document (resolution 60/1). The document falls short of our expectations. Still, it provides important direction on how to improve and strengthen the role of the United Nations in building peace and security and promoting human rights and development.

In some areas, Member States made considerable progress; in others, better results should have been achieved. In particular, I had hoped for — and worked for — a substantial text on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction represents a fundamental threat. There is a growing risk of proliferation and of catastrophic terrorism. At the same time, we see a reluctance on the part of some to accept that all States must advance disarmament and non-proliferation.

During the past week, I have repeatedly heard in the General Assembly that we are willing to solve common problems. Yet it has not been possible to reach any consensus on how to address these truly global threats. I can assure members that Norway will take up the challenge set out by the Secretary-General and will continue to seek consensus and concrete results. We will do that together with Australia, Chile, Indonesia, Romania, South Africa and the United Kingdom and with all those countries that supported our efforts.

Further progress is also urgently needed to prevent the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Norway welcomes the outcome document's call for implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons. We would have liked, however, to see a stronger commitment to controlling international transfers of such weapons through legally binding agreements.

The international community needs to cooperate in order to meet global challenges. We are faced with an array of new threats and challenges: I just spoke of the risk of proliferation; terrorism is another. The spread of new and infectious diseases is also a frightening prospect. Multilateralism is the answer. We must face all these threats together and reach agreement on how to meet them. The global arena must be continually reformed and adapted to make sure that we have a United Nations that is in the best possible shape. We cannot blame others if it does not function. As the Secretary-General said in his statement to the

summit, "Whatever our differences, in our interdependent world, we stand or fall together" (*A/60/PV.2, p. 5*).

Our greatest responsibility is to ensure that the strong protect the weak. Our greatest failure is when we, the Members of the United Nations, are unable to prevent atrocities against innocent civilians. For the first time, Member States have endorsed the principle of the "responsibility to protect". That creates an important new basis for collective action in cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and war crimes. We now have the tools to prevent another Srebrenica or another Rwanda.

A greater consensus on collective action and early diplomatic response are needed to prevent violent conflicts. Addressing the needs of countries under stress is a demanding challenge for the United Nations; so is assisting countries suffering from conflict and in transition from war to peace. The peace process that Norway is facilitating between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has benefited from United Nations support. The Organization's role in providing humanitarian and development assistance to all areas of Sri Lanka has been indispensable.

I therefore welcome the initiative to establish a Peacebuilding Commission to marshal resources, give advice and propose comprehensive strategies for peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery. The situation in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other conflict-afflicted areas clearly demonstrates the need for a Peacebuilding Commission. As long as the Security Council remains actively seized of a matter, the Peacebuilding Commission should provide advice to the Council. Norway will contribute $15 million to the Peacebuilding Fund. The role and the needs of women should be duly reflected in the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission. The Commission should contribute to the follow-up of the binding commitments set out in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

While supporting the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, Norway places great emphasis on the need to maintain and strengthen the activity of the Secretary-General to take initiatives through his good offices.

As we convene here in New York, an estimated 10 million people are facing severe food shortages in Southern Africa. According to the Secretary-General, the chronic state of emergency in the region is caused by a combination of HIV/AIDS, food insecurity and a weakened capacity for governance. During recent months, there has also been a severe drought in Niger and in parts of the Sahel region.

The response capacity of the United Nations is in need of reform. That means improving the speed, equity and predictability of humanitarian response. An upgraded and expanded Central Emergency Response Fund is an important step in the right direction; so is improved coordination at the field level, including the Humanitarian Coordinator system. The General Assembly must now take the decisions necessary for the new Fund to become operational as early as possible. Norway has pledged $15 million to the Fund, and we stand ready to assist in putting in place the necessary organizational framework.

The United Nations is making a significant contribution to development. The universal endorsement of the Millennium Development Goals and the renewed commitment to achieving them by 2015 are key results of the summit; so are the strengthened commitments concerning increased official development assistance (ODA) and debt relief made during the preparations leading up to the summit, particularly by the European Union and the Group of Eight. The world community must now make sure that promises are followed by payments and that the focus on Africa remains strong. Norway will do its part by increasing its ODA contributions to Africa for 2006 by $150 million.

International trade is a prerequisite for economic growth and development. Norway is committed to the further development of a rule-based and fair multilateral trading system. The ongoing World Trade Organization negotiations are approaching a crucial crossroads in Hong Kong in December. We must redouble our efforts to achieve the fullest possible realization of the Doha work programme in order to successfully complete the Doha development round in 2006. Particular attention must be paid to the needs and interests of developing countries.

No cause can justify acts of terror. The United Nations should have a central role in leading and coordinating the international fight against terrorism. A

broad-based strategy is necessary to counter this threat, as recommended by the Secretary-General. The fight against terrorism must be based on the rule of law. The role of the United Nations is essential, because it can provide the legal instruments and frameworks we need. I encourage all States to sign, ratify and implement the 13 United Nations conventions related to terrorism. Norway strongly supports the efforts to conclude a comprehensive United Nations convention on international terrorism.

Terrorism must be fought by a broad range of means, including military and legal means. Other threats to peace and stability must also be addressed, such as poverty and unemployment, lack of social and political rights, absence of the rule of law and lack of access to education. The United Nations has a vital role to play in all those areas. It has more experience on those issues than any other organization and possesses the most suitable tools to address them.

Defending human rights is a principal universal objective. When human rights defenders are silenced, violations of human rights go unnoticed, unexposed and unopposed. The issue of individuals and groups subject to human rights violations should be put firmly on the agenda of all countries. I call for members' continued support for a draft resolution to that end.

It is vital that we assign human rights their rightful place as a fundamental pillar of the United Nations. Our goal in the coming months must be to bridge the gap between expectations for credible United Nations action in the field of human rights and the capacities of the Organization. We must take the following steps.

We must create a new standing human rights body as soon as possible, preferably as a principal organ of the United Nations. It must focus on both implementation and capacity-building. It must also be able to deal swiftly with human rights violations worldwide in a credible and effective manner. The strengths and best practices of the Commission on Human Rights must be retained and its weaknesses left behind.

And we must strengthen the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights by respecting, in the Fifth Committee, the decision of the summit to double the regular budget resources of the Office.

There is a need for stronger executive leadership and thorough administrative reform of the Organization. Corruption, mismanagement and sexual exploitation and abuse are examples of conduct that cannot be tolerated.

We have decided to make the Office of Internal Oversight Services more independent. The Office's capacity to carry out audits and investigations will be significantly strengthened. It is necessary to further strengthen the accountability of the Secretariat and improve management performance, as well as reinforce ethical conduct. Responsibility for many of the weaknesses in the United Nations system, however, lies with the Member States themselves.

We need a more relevant General Assembly as the chief policymaking body of the Organization. That will require strategic leadership on the part of Member States. The Secretary-General, as the chief administrative officer, must be granted sufficient authority and flexibility to carry out his duties. In order to strengthen the Organization's capacity to ensure that mandates are fulfilled, we need to provide the necessary resources. In order to maintain an efficient organization, we need to review existing mandates and revoke those that are no longer relevant.

The management reform process provides a golden opportunity to increase the recruitment of women at all levels of the United Nations. Good governance in a modern organization requires contributions from women on an equal footing with men.

Some have called the results of the summit just another step along the way. In my view, many important steps were taken. Now it is up to the General Assembly to follow up. I promise that Norway will do its part. We will continue to work for reforms. The United Nations system must become more effective in securing global peace and security, combating poverty and promoting human rights. In the end, it is we, the Member States, who are responsible for making that a reality.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia): Allow me to extend to you, Sir, our warm congratulations on your election to preside over the historic sixtieth session of the General

Assembly. You can rest assured of the fullest cooperation of my delegation. We want to express our appreciation to the President of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, our brother, Mr. Jean Ping, whose tenure as President of the Assembly coincided with momentous events at the United Nations that required both wisdom and a great deal of competence on the part of the President. Mr. Jean Ping showed he had both, and he has made us all proud.

We are, as usual, grateful to our Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, whose tenure of office will always be remembered as a period of enormous dedication to the reform of the United Nations and of a noble effort to mobilize international support to combat extreme poverty.

The outcome document which our heads of State or Government endorsed (resolution 60/1) reflects the global consensus on the fact that the reform of the United Nations is essential and timely. My delegation welcomes the document, which outlines a far-reaching agenda for change.

The achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by those vulnerable to being thrown off track is critical to all, not just to those directly affected. It would be regrettable if targets that have so much significance for the well-being of all were missed in the course of the next 10 years due to failure on the part of those directly affected or a lack of solidarity at the international level. We strongly believe that the targets are neither unrealistic nor unduly ambitious.

It cannot be emphasized enough that, at the end of the day, those that have primary responsibility for prevailing over extreme poverty are those that are directly affected. But those that suffer from extreme poverty require the support of the international community to stay on track to achieve the MDGs.

In concrete terms, that means that official development assistance and measures on debt relief and trade need to be aligned with the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. In that regard, we are encouraged by the progress made at the Group of Eight Gleneagles summit. We were also encouraged by the commitment of leaders at the High-level Plenary Meeting to address the current distortions in international trade, including through the elimination of agricultural subsidies. There is nothing more important for low-income countries than a partnership that is predictable, consistent and based on previously defined mutual obligations.

No amount of international cooperation will be enough to achieve the Millennium Development Goals unless domestic conditions are met in all relevant areas. We in Ethiopia have been doing our level best in that regard. We have spared no effort to change the economic situation in our country for the better, our primary focus being the rural sector. Ethiopia has made a tireless effort to implement the Millennium Development Goals.

Despite all the complications and the absence of a tradition of loyal opposition, the recent elections in Ethiopia have demonstrated the depth of commitment we have to transform the tradition of governance in Ethiopia — a tradition that has been as remote from democracy as it is possible to be. Those elections stand out as a milestone in the process of democratization of the State and of society at large. Ethiopia has entered into a new era of a vibrant multiparty political system.

In the area of peace — and particularly with respect to peace in our subregion — we, along with like-minded partners, will continue to be pillars for peace and stability.

On the fight against terrorism, Ethiopia will continue to discharge its responsibility in cooperation with other peace-loving countries. Ethiopia rejects terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We in Ethiopia are determined to work with the international community to implement the counter-terrorism strategy.

In connection with our deep aspiration for peace, our only source of disappointment is the lingering dispute we have with Eritrea. Ethiopia has been contributing more than its share to resolve that outstanding problem. In his statement on Wednesday, 21 September (*see A/60/PV.19*), the Eritrean representative officially threatened to use force against Ethiopia on the basis of the unfounded allegation that part of Eritrean territory is under Ethiopian occupation. I find it incumbent upon me to set the record straight.

This is a problem that grew out of an act of aggression committed by Eritrea against Ethiopia. It is no secret how Ethiopia managed to reverse the Eritrean aggression and how it created the conditions for a peaceful resolution of the crisis between the two countries, based on legality, to which Ethiopia has been

and remains committed. Any suggestion, such as the one made by the Eritrean representative on Wednesday, that Eritrean territory is occupied is a mockery of the truth and an insult to the intelligence of the international community.

The threat or use of force should have no place as a means of resolving disputes between States. That is a principle to which Ethiopia has adhered: before the Eritrean act of aggression, after the aggression was reversed and since. Regrettably, Eritrea's attitude is different, as has been repeatedly evidenced on the ground in our region and in statements made by Eritrean officials in different forums, including the General Assembly. The Eritrean Government needs to be reminded that it should make no mistake: it will be held accountable for its actions.

Ethiopia has always been committed to the rule of law and to the maintenance of peace and stability. Our five-point peace plan of 25 November 2004 for moving forward towards peace with Eritrea, which was welcomed by the international community, demonstrates Ethiopia's seriousness in that regard. Eritrea knows that Ethiopia has been ready for dialogue, both to ensure the demarcation of the boundary on the basis of the decision of the Boundary Commission and to normalize relations between the two countries.

Eritrea abhors dialogue, perhaps because it suspects that dialogue would eventually lead to peace. It is not clear whether the Government of Eritrea believes that peace serves its interests. Perhaps the people of Eritrea need to be kept on their toes, with their gaze focused on artificial external adversity. In any event, Eritrea has no reason to be angry at Ethiopia or at the world. Eritrea dragged Ethiopia into war in 1998 and now continues to be an obstacle to the normalization of relations between the two countries and peoples.

The problem between Ethiopia and Eritrea has never been, and is not, a legal one; rather, it is political in nature, and Ethiopia has the political will to move forward. We invite Eritrea to join us in that effort. Ethiopia does not believe at all in sabre-rattling, least of all between countries that should have little time to spare from fighting extreme poverty.

On the continental level, we are encouraged by the dynamism that the new African Union has injected into the joint African effort for peace and stability. There is no doubt that reform of the United Nations could create even greater possibilities for Africa to play its proper role, not only within Africa but also outside the continent.

Ethiopia continues to attach great importance to the reform of the United Nations. We believe that, although all our expectations have not been met, the High-level Plenary Meeting provided great impetus for making progress, in terms of both achieving the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the reform of the United Nations. It is our hope that it will be possible to make progress in the course of this session.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Ethiopia's commitment to the United Nations, and its preparedness to do whatever is necessary to contribute to efforts designed to make the Organization more effective and more representative.

The President: I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Trevor Walker, Minister of State of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Walker (Antigua and Barbuda): This is the first time that a representative from the island of Barbuda has had the honour to address the General Assembly. For my country, the nation of Antigua and Barbuda — and, more important, for my fellow Barbudans — this is indeed a historic and significant milestone.

The Government and the people of Antigua and Barbuda have full confidence in the multilateral system, and in the United Nations as the primary instrument of multilateralism. Further, we believe that only through cooperation at the international level can micro-States like Antigua and Barbuda begin to address the global threats and challenges that jeopardize our existence, our way of life and our ability to make progress.

Antigua and Barbuda attaches great importance to the work of the United Nations and to the outcome of the collective decisions of the family of nations. We look forward to safeguards for small developing States in all stages of multilateral processes, and specifically in the outcome document of the 2005 world summit (resolution 60/1).

Taking stock of the achievement of the objectives of the outcome of major United Nations conferences and summits is a task we approach with trepidation.

Antigua and Barbuda is attempting to achieve and sustain a decent standard of living for our people and for future generations. Our progress report is a mixed one, tinged with both hope and frustration. We are hopeful because we have achieved a lot with our meagre resources. In the face of severe economic hardship, we have managed to achieve a literacy rate of over 90 per cent among young people aged 15 to 25 years. Access to primary and secondary education is mandatory and is provided free of cost by the Government to all students aged 5 to 16. All public school students are provided with school uniforms and the required textbooks free of cost. To accommodate our expanding student population, only this week we commissioned a new school on my island of Barbuda.

Poor people need access to the necessary resources so that they can take charge of their own development. That is why the Barbudan people are extremely proud of what we consider to be a very progressive land policy for the ownership of land on our island. The Barbuda Lands Act, which is scheduled to be introduced in Parliament shortly, stipulates that all land on Barbuda be owned in common by the Barbudan people.

In the area of health care, we in Antigua and Barbuda have a national medical benefits programme that provides low-cost access to health-care services and prescription drugs. Our child mortality rate is among the lowest in developing countries, and our nutrition level for children aged 5 years and under is among the highest.

The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women has been a priority area for Antigua and Barbuda. We signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and are currently working on the ratification of the Convention's Optional Protocol. With regard to the Millennium Development Goal pertaining to the empowerment of women, Antigua and Barbuda has made noteworthy strides. Our first woman was elected to Parliament in the last general elections. Our Speaker of Parliament and our President of the Senate are women, and there are two women in our Cabinet. Concerted efforts have been made to promote women's political participation at all levels.

In spite of such progress, however, we continue to experience a high level of frustration with regard to development. That is because the progress we have made thus far is at risk of being wiped away. As a middle-income small island developing State, we are continually handed the sharp edge of the sword to hold when it comes to a number of issues of international development. It is as if we were being punished by the international community for having achieved some measure of progress with very meagre resources and despite severe external challenges.

The Monterrey Consensus represents a pact between developed and developing countries, the objective of which is the scaling up of financing for development. Yet there is nothing in the Monterrey Consensus that so-called middle-income countries can benefit from. We have fulfilled the responsibilities accorded to Governments of developing countries as stipulated in the Monterrey Consensus. We continue to go beyond those responsibilities to consolidate the principles of accountability, transparency and good governance in laws we introduced in Parliament in the seventh month of the first term of the incumbent Government of Antigua and Barbuda.

All of that took place against a backdrop of a declining trend in the flow of official development assistance (ODA) to the Caribbean region. It is necessary for international agreements on financing for development, such as the Monterrey Consensus, to include all developing countries, and not sideline those that have achieved some measure of progress. Our frustration with the Monterrey Consensus, and with financing for development in general, would not be so acute were it not been for the brutal challenges we face in other areas that are potential engines for economic growth and development.

We have been forced to ask ourselves if a pro-development trade regime is something the international community really wants. Our neighbours in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have been dragged through brutal trade battles, struggling to keep alive their agricultural sector, namely, the banana and sugar industries. The Caribbean Community has for years been lamenting the importance of those two sectors to the livelihood of our people. A pro-development trade regime would not amputate the feet of such small vulnerable players and leave them to haemorrhage. And that is exactly what has transpired with regard to our banana- and sugar-producing CARICOM neighbours.

As if that were not enough, we in Antigua and Barbuda now find ourselves under attack in yet another sector. Last week, during the 2005 world summit, the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda (see A/60/PV.4) spoke of the need for us to seek the intervention of the World Trade Organization in the dispute with the United States over Internet gaming. With trade in agriculture proving continually difficult for developing States in general, and for small island States in particular, the services sector is just about the only option we currently have for diversification. For Antigua and Barbuda, the tourism sector has been good to us, but it is extremely volatile, and our high levels of environmental and economic vulnerability necessitate strategically identifying other options for economic growth and development. One such option is Internet gaming. But due to the unfair trade practices of highly developed countries, notably the United States, we are finding it increasingly difficult to realize development benefits from Internet gaming.

In addition to that, the principle of special and differential treatment for countries with special needs, such as small island developing States, is under perpetual assault by highly developed countries. After careful consideration and evaluation, we are forced to conclude that there is nothing tangible for small developing States in the Monterrey Consensus. We are losing the battle on the issue of trade, and so we attempt to hitch our proverbial wagon to foreign direct investment as a means of stimulating economic growth and development. But once again, our efforts meet with frustration. Why? Because of unsustainable debt.

Our experience has shown that highly indebted countries find it extremely difficult to attract private international finance. The international community now realizes the importance of debt reduction and debt forgiveness to development. We urge that the situation of heavily indebted middle-income countries be given serious attention by the international community. If more is not done to address the debt problem of middle-income countries, we risk reversing our development gains. Instead of a reduction, the net result may actually be increasing levels of poverty.

Antigua and Barbuda fully supports all efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With regard to environmental sustainability, small islands like Antigua and Barbuda face the challenge of very limited land space and fragile ecosystems, and are highly vulnerable to natural disasters and the effects of climate change. Compounding those challenges is our heavy dependence on the natural environment to support our tourism product, which accounts for almost 80 per cent of our gross national income. Two thirds of the island of Barbuda is merely a few feet above sea level. Threats to our natural environment are threats to our very way of life and existence. We therefore welcome paragraphs 51 to 53 in the 2005 world summit outcome document on the issue of climate change.

The devastation wrought by the increased intensity of hurricanes has set us back years, even decades, on the development scale. Antigua and Barbuda stresses the need for policies to mitigate the effects of hurricanes and other natural disasters on small developing States, as well as the establishment of an effective system of long-term support for countries recovering from disasters.

International drug trafficking has major security implications for our islands. Drug traffickers often use our shores and surrounding waters as trans-shipment points for their illegal cargo, resulting in an increase in the criminal element within our fragile societies. Those criminals operate within very sophisticated networks that are beyond the reach and capacity of our resources. It is a situation that puts the security of the entire region at risk. This is one area that begs for greater international attention.

Antigua and Barbuda is in agreement with many of the recommendations to strengthen the United Nations, as contained in the outcome document of the 2005 world summit. We support those reform proposals, the objective of which is to make the United Nations more democratic, increase its legitimacy and enhance its work.

At a time when multilateralism is coming under attack, we, as small developing States, remain ever mindful of the need for the United Nations. We share equally in the quest for peace and security and are heartened by the growing recognition that there can be no peace and security without development. We call for further and unambiguous acknowledgement of the security-development nexus and for the economic development of all countries to be accorded equal priority as international peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ouch Borith, Secretary of State of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Ouch (Cambodia): I wish to join other representatives in congratulating you, Sir, on your unanimous election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I am confident that, under your able guidance, the General Assembly will respond wisely and effectively to the needs and expectations of the international community. I would like to assure you of Cambodia's full support and cooperation as you carry out the duties and tasks of your high office.

While commending the efforts and contributions of Mr. Jean Ping, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, I wish also to express my appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his political vision and his firm commitment to the efforts to strengthen and revitalize the role of the United Nations in securing international peace, strengthening international security and forging international cooperation.

In these times of uncertainties and difficulties, when the world seems to be inundated by conflicts and tribulations, the summit of the General Assembly and the outcome document reaffirmed our commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and provided us with a new hope for achieving our noble goals of strengthening peace and stability in the world, a sine qua non for the development and prosperity of all humankind. Admittedly, the outcome document did not respond to all of our concerns, but it gave us a framework for our future action. It is important for us to keep hope alive and to maintain our commitment to global peace and to taking the necessary steps to ensure that that noble goal will one day be achieved.

As a country that has just emerged from many years of war and internal conflicts, Cambodia understands the paramount importance of peace. Cambodia is firmly convinced that more weapons will not bring more security to the world. Disarmament, like any other matter on our agenda today, cannot be dealt with in isolation. There is an urgent need for that matter to be dealt with at the national, regional and international levels. We are of the view that the promotion of confidence-building measures is necessary in that endeavour. The experiences gained by the Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations — now in its eleventh year of existence — have confirmed the rightness of that approach.

This explains the rationale behind Cambodia's ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction on 19 July 2005. Cambodia is a proponent of the reinforcement of international law, which, inter alia, incorporates the major instruments to curb the arms race, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We note with dismay and deep concern that the recent NPT Review Conference ended without achieving any results, and we regret the failure to reach consensus on that very crucial issue in the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting. Cambodia profoundly believes in the necessity and benefit of disarmament. We believe that people need food, not weapons.

After 11 September 2001, security perceptions have changed drastically. Nobody and no country is safe from terrorism, which has caused untold suffering and death among innocent people and knows no distinction between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, between a super-Power and a little speck in the ocean, as we have seen in many parts of the world. When death strikes, we are all the same. The security of our people cannot be assured and ensured through weaponry and sophisticated technology alone.

Another threat created by the force of nature, Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and even Florida, reinforced us in that conviction. The human brain is a decisive factor of and the essence behind our efforts to counter security threats and threats of any other nature. Therefore, it is more important than ever that our strategies be preventive, comprehensive, inclusive and global in nature. I would like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the people and the Royal Government of Cambodia, my profound condolences to the families of the victims who have lost their lives, as well as deepest sympathy for the survivors of that tragic incident.

During the summit, our leaders endorsed the Secretary-General's identification of elements of a counter-terrorism strategy. Such a strategy would contribute to our concerted efforts to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, which would be undertaken in full respect of human rights and fundamental freedom. I hope that our joint efforts will

lead to an agreement on the comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

As part of the Government's policy of playing an active role in international efforts to combat terrorism, in particular by fulfilling its obligations spelled out by the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the United Nations, Cambodia has implemented some necessary measures recently. Among other things, we are in the process of finalizing our national anti-terrorism law.

As we have learned through our experience over the years, the causes of terrorism do not arise spontaneously. Only through continuous and consistent efforts to promote tolerance, social development, economic growth and democracy, and to build a global coalition involving all civilizations, all religions, all cultures and all political systems can we fight injustice, poverty and the other roots of those malicious and often lethal acts. Those long-term measures are of significance in our mission effectively to prevent acts of violence and extreme aggression.

Sixty years ago, the United Nations was established to spare future generations from the scourge of war. However, the foundation of peace lies in the success of our respective Governments, their peoples and the world community at large in forging their future and the future of their children through better health care, education and economic and professional opportunities in a safe and secure social environment that abides by the rule of law and the culture of merit and honesty.

It goes without saying that development is the cement for peace. Development in one part of the world cannot be sustained without development elsewhere. Cambodia believes in national ownership in devising strategies to develop itself. We also believe in the crucial importance and necessity of international partnership. We equally believe in the importance of good governance at the national, international and corporate levels. How could we explain our mutual dependency otherwise? Transparency and mutual accountability are the best guarantees of a successful partnership.

Cambodia has expressed its full commitment to the Millennium Declaration. In 2003, Cambodia localized the global Millennium Development Goals, which it calls the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals (CMDGs). The CMDGs, which reflect the realities of Cambodia, are based on a strong national consensus. Specific indicators have been adopted for each CMDG, including the benchmarks and the short-, medium- and long-term values to be achieved by 2005, 2010 and 2015. In all, the CMDGs cover nine areas of long-term and short-term goals, 25 overall targets, and 106 specific targets covering extreme poverty and hunger; universal, nine-year basic education; gender equality and women's empowerment; child mortality; maternal health; HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; environmental sustainability; global partnership for development; and demining, unexploded ordinance and victim assistance.

At present, Cambodia is in the process of preparing a national strategic development plan for 2006-2010 by combining its earlier socio-economic development plan and its national poverty reduction strategy processes and integrating them into the CMDGs. The resulting CMDG-based national poverty reduction strategy will be rooted in the "rectangular strategy" for growth, employment, equity and efficiency, which provides the political platform of the Royal Government in the third legislature (2004-2008) of Cambodia's National Assembly.

Our progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals is constrained by a number of impediments, including the chronic shortage of investment funds to meet our priority requirements. That resource gap needs to be bridged through increased flows of external finance. That is necessary since the current concessions given by the international community to least developed countries like Cambodia provide only limited benefit to us and need to be supplemented by increased inflows of development finance. If we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, greater financial inflows through aid, reduced debt servicing and increased current account inflows are critical to bridging the resource gaps and fostering the required growth.

It is in that connection that we would like to reiterate our call for the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. We welcome the establishment of timetables by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance by no later than 2015 and to reach at least 0.5 per cent by 2009. We urge those developed countries that have not yet done so to make concrete efforts and invite them to establish timetables for achieving the target of 0.7 per cent. We also urge

those developed countries to achieve the target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance to the least developed countries.

The Royal Government of Cambodia welcomes the resumption of the six-party talks on the Korean peninsula. Equally crucial is the continuation of the inter-Korean dialogue. It is our belief that open channels of communication are essential in building a strong foundation for attempts to pursue peace and stability in the Korean peninsula.

We also welcome the recent positive developments in the Middle East and continue to encourage the implementation of the road map and the relevant Security Council resolutions. After all the years of war and conflict, we reiterate our call on both sides to continue taking steps towards peace, no matter how small they might seem at the time, in order to give the children of Palestine and Israel the opportunity to live in harmony.

The dire situation in Africa deserves our outmost concern and action. Too many African children and adults have suffered too long from too many conflicts. At the end of the day, the world community, through the United Nations and the Group of Eight leading industrial countries should strive to make more efficient efforts and to take timely action to tackle the severe plights of numerous innocent people in sub-Saharan Africa.

It is important for us never to lose hope, because, as history has shown us, hope is what carries us through difficult times and dreadful challenges. Because of hope, we lend a hand to others. Because of hope, we let ourselves be assisted by others. Although we are indeed facing an uphill battle in our attempts to overcome the challenges of peace, security and development together, our noble goals to provide a better future for our children and grandchildren will be achieved. Let us have faith in our common house, the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Fayssal Mekdad, chairman of the delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. Your renowned experience in international affairs, especially in the United Nations system, will undoubtedly guarantee success for our deliberations. I cannot fail to seize this opportunity to express to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon, our thanks and appreciation for his efforts towards the successful conduct of the deliberations of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. It also gives me pleasure to express to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, our appreciation for his efforts to implement the resolutions of the Organization and to fulfil the purposes of its Charter.

During the 60 years of its existence, the United Nations has witnessed heated debates and bitter differences. Yet this Organization remains a forum for dialogue among nations on the means of building a secure world. While we agree with others on the need to reform the United Nations and take new international developments into account, we stress that such a process should be constructive and should apply lessons learned and the positive experiences that the United Nations has had. We also believe that such a process should unite and not divide us. It is through broad agreement that we will be able to enhance the authority and legitimacy of the United Nations, as well as its ability to effectively respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

We must not forget that this Organization belongs to us all, and not merely to one particular party. We should therefore find the wisdom to preserve it for future generations.

Five years ago, we adopted a declaration in which we set out the international community's vision for the new millennium. Regrettably, both facts and figures show that the results have not lived up to our expectations. The objectives defined remain unfulfilled. Poverty, hunger and epidemics are prevalent throughout the world, while tension and foreign occupation continue to threaten international peace and security and hamper development for those living under foreign occupation. Failure to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, foremost among which are nuclear weapons, haunts us and threatens peace. It is no longer feasible to delay the reform of the world economic order. Moreover, reform should not be confined to this international Organization. Rather, it must encompass all international economic and financial institutions, particularly those that contribute to economic decision-making. The road ahead lies in

fairness, equality and democratic participation. The Bretton Woods institutions, whose decisions bear directly on life in our countries, should be the prime candidates for the overdue reform. We deem it fit to recall the recommendation of several summit meetings, in both the North and the South, supporting the developing countries' right to join the World Trade Organization, with no hurdles and in a depoliticized way.

Speaking of development, we welcome the important outcomes of the three summits held during the past five months on development, namely, the Asian-African Summit, the South American-Arab Countries Summit, and the second South-South Summit. Those meetings rejected the imposition of unilateral sanctions, considering such a policy to be in violation of the principles of the Charter and international law and dangerous to development plans and reform processes in the targeted countries.

The main focus of discussions in the High-level Plenary Meeting was the reform of the United Nations. We believe that the reform process will not be complete if it does not take into consideration the inability of the United Nations, for reasons known to all, to implement its resolutions pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict. These reasons are primarily embodied in the generous support and unlimited protection offered by some to Israeli aggression against the Arab states and to Israel's continuing occupation of the Syrian Golan, the Palestinian territories, and parts of southern Lebanon.

Syria has declared that the withdrawal of settlers and Israeli forces from Gaza is undoubtedly a first step but that this alone is not enough for peace. What is required is the implementation of all United Nations resolutions, the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, the return of the occupied Golan Heights and the return of refugees. There are relentless attempts by the Israeli side in particular and also by those who support it to portray this withdrawal as a great accomplishment that is also painful. However, they are neglecting the fact that the painful Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip lasted for over 38 years, during which our brothers in the Gaza Strip in particular suffered from the horrors of occupation and its inhumane practices.

Moreover, this abominable occupation persists in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, as well as in the occupied Syrian territories in the Golan. As affirmed by many delegations in their statements this session, the international community must be wary and must demand that the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip be a full withdrawal from land, sea, and air in order for it to be considered a complete withdrawal. Moreover, this withdrawal cannot be accepted as a cover for the continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, nor can it be a cover for the continued existence of settlements and the separation wall in these territories, especially since the General Assembly has expressed its support for the legal opinion of the International Court of Justice on the illegitimate nature of the wall. Israel has rejected the opinion.

In 1981, the Security Council passed resolution 497 (1981), deeming the Israeli decision to annex the Golan null and void. The General Assembly has passed dozens of resolutions condemning all the measures and actions taken by Israel — the occupying Power — to change the nature of the occupied Syrian Golan and its legal status and considering such measures null and void and a blatant violation of international law and the Geneva Conventions. In defiance of resolutions of international legitimacy, Israel has evicted almost half a million Syrians from their land and continues to detain dozens of Syrians, some of whom have been imprisoned for over 30 years. Israel still calls for the construction of more settlements in the occupied Syrian territories. The question is: If Israel claims that withdrawing its settlers is painful and if it is genuine in its desire for peace in the region, then why does its Government continue to build settlements and bring settlers in to the occupied Syrian and Palestinian Arab territories?

Syria has exerted every effort possible to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region. It has continued to declare its readiness to resume the peace process unconditionally, keeping in mind that the implementation of resolutions of international legitimacy is not considered a precondition. However, all these efforts have gone to waste because of Israel's greed and its defiance of international legitimacy.

Therefore, we would like to affirm that peace in the Middle East, to which the international community aspires, cannot be achieved unless Israel abides by the resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principle of land for peace and the Madrid Peace Conference terms of reference, and unless it

accepts the initiative that was put forth by the Arab States at the 2002 Beirut summit and reaffirmed at the Tunis and Algiers summits.

The international community is following the tragic events that have been unfolding in sisterly Iraq as a result of its occupation and the attempts to fragment the unity of its land and its people. We are now facing a tragic situation that has led to the death of thousands of innocent Iraqis and to the destruction of that sisterly country's infrastructure. Guided by our desire to stem the bloodshed, we have taken many measures, which has put a burden on our resources.

Syria has deployed thousands of its soldiers along the Iraqi-Syrian border. We have also intercepted many of those attempting to infiltrate the border into Iraq. In contrast, those who ceaselessly hurl accusations at Syria have failed to shoulder their responsibility to ensure effective control of the border from the other side. The responsibility is shared between the two neighbouring countries. Although some had promised to assist us and provide technical equipment for border control, they have failed to keep their promises.

Syria condemns the acts of terrorism that continue to be perpetrated throughout Iraq, causing many casualties among innocent civilians. We stress that preserving the unity of Iraq's territory and people in these critical times requires a full commitment to national unity on the part of all segments and groups of the Iraqi population. Furthermore, Syria condemns all statements aimed at creating discord and infighting among the Iraqi people. Such statements have been disseminated by suspect groups that wish to spread chaos, extinguish hope and exacerbate suffering. Syria will continue to support the political process in Iraq, until the country and its people overcome their plight and are able to exercise their right to self-determination in a unified, secure and prosperous Iraq.

Syria welcomes the interest shown by the United Nations and its Member States in combating and eradicating terrorism. I find it necessary to affirm that Syria was one of the first countries to experience terrorism and that it has fought to eradicate it. From this rostrum, Syria reaffirms that it will continue to cooperate with all States seeking to eradicate terrorism and implement all relevant Security Council resolutions.

Furthermore, Syria has signed and ratified international conventions on terrorism, including, most recently, the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which we signed on the first day it was open for signature, 14 September 2005. Syria emphasizes that it is crucially important to avoid confusing terrorism — which we are combating and sincerely cooperating to eradicate — with the just struggle of peoples for liberation and independence, seeking to put an end to foreign occupation. That is a right guaranteed by the Charter of the United Nations, which most Member States of the Organization hold dear. Syria was also among the first countries to initiate, in 1986, the proposal that an international conference be convened under United Nations auspices to define terrorism and consider its root causes.

The outcome of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) held several months ago revealed the need to refocus international efforts on nuclear disarmament and to ensure the Treaty's universality. The facts clearly indicate the importance of returning to the principle of multilateralism and of making operational the various multilateral international conventions on disarmament issues.

At any rate, the Middle East region continues to experience a unique situation that is both a source of concern and a cause for censure. Israel alone runs a dangerous military nuclear programme outside any international framework and refuses to adhere to the NPT, while all the other States of the region are party to the Treaty and respect it in letter and spirit. Here, I must recall once again Syria's initiative, proposed on behalf of all the Arab States to the Security Council on 29 December 2003, to eradicate all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, from the Middle East region as a step towards declaring it a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, including banning nuclear weapons and preventing their proliferation.

Syria is undergoing a serious process of comprehensive economic and social reforms. The Syrian human development plan is modelled on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); thus the plan's objectives serve as stepping stones towards the ultimate achievement of the MDGs. The Syrian Government's strategy is based on the principles of cooperation for development, as reflected in the concept of an effective development partnership among the State, the private sector and civil society. Syria is

striving to develop domestic investment, to encourage foreign investment and to improve the infrastructure and the performance of our institutions, while eliminating waste and fighting corruption.

Important reports have recently been prepared in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme, including an analysis of the macroeconomic situation; reports on poverty, national development and the Millennium Goals; and a Human Development Report on education. Syria accords due importance and attention to empowering women and promoting their rights so that they can fulfil their role. In addition, Syria attaches great importance to children, to persons with special needs and the disabled with a view to securing their future.

Syria supports reform of the Security Council aimed at improving its working methods, including increasing its transparency. As I have previously stressed, we believe in the importance of just representation of all regions in the Council through the expansion of both the permanent and the non-permanent membership categories, and the need for representation of the Arab States through a permanent seat in any Council expansion.

Africa remains at the centre of Syria's concerns. Without stability in Africa, there will never be genuine development in the world. The Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1) calls for sufficient efforts to satisfy the special needs of Africa. We believe that that is necessary and correct. We do not believe that the Security Council can resolve Africa's problems by holding more meetings on the continent. It is more important to achieve concrete results by responding to Africa's voice, respecting its viewpoints and taking its concerns into account. In that regard, we should like to pay tribute to the efforts of the African Union, as reflected in its mediation and good offices aimed at crisis settlement in Africa.

The modern world and multilateral diplomacy, represented in the United Nations, stand at the threshold of a new era. Let us all rise to the challenges confronting us so that we may guarantee a future of security, peace and stability for mankind.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Kirsti Lintonen, chairperson of the delegation of the Republic of Finland.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): Let me begin by noting that Finland is pleased to see you, Sir, preside over this most crucial of General Assembly sessions. We also salute your predecessor, Jean Ping of Gabon, who worked tirelessly and successfully to strengthen the United Nations and make it more relevant.

At the Millennium Summit five years ago, we set a forward-looking and ambitious agenda for the United Nations in the new millennium. Our success there was the result of a unique common political will and an optimistic, can-do spirit. Through the endeavours at the Summit, that spirit was strengthened and deepened among world leaders. We built on that success in Monterrey and Johannesburg. There was hope that the world was moving towards a positive cycle, that all our boats would be lifted and that both new and old threats would be met with a common resolve.

The outcome document adopted at the world summit held last week was, in many respects, a step forward. In others, we failed to match the expectations of our peoples. That, however, does not necessarily signal a permanent erosion of our common political will and our common agenda. Rather, I am confident that it was primarily a result of the enormity of the task at hand: to reaffirm the goals agreed upon five years ago, to assess and expedite the progress made since then and to fundamentally reform the United Nations Organization — all at the same time. We are confident that under your leadership, Mr. President, the General Assembly will be able to make further significant progress at the current session. Let me pledge Finland's full support to you, Sir, as we prepare to assume the presidency of the European Union during the second half of next year.

Finland aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union. Let me make just a few additional comments of substance.

First, if one were to try to identify the single biggest positive outcome of the momentous process under way at the United Nations since the Secretary-General's "fork in the road" speech two years ago (*see A/58/PV.7*), it would probably be the near-universal acceptance of the close linkage between development, security and human rights. Compared with five years ago, we now view all issues in a truly integrated fashion. Above all, it is the broad realization of the

pivotal role of the rule of law for both security and development that strikes us as almost revolutionary.

I would particularly stress the centrality of the rule of law in promoting sustainable development and sustained economic growth. The solid foundation of the rule of law is needed more than ever if we are to support developing countries in building their national capacity to create wealth and to take off economically.

Finland is happy to note the increased attention and resources being devoted within the whole United Nations system to supporting the rule of law and related activities. Much more, however, needs to be done. We must remember that accountability and good governance at the global level start at the national level, by strengthening domestic democratic institutions, internal democratic processes, the rule of law, independent judiciaries and the role of parliaments. It is in those areas that the United Nations can and must assist needy Member States in building their national capacities.

Secondly, an area that we would like to see discussed and further elaborated here at the United Nations is the interrelationship between development and social justice. As the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report 2005* put it, deep disparities based on wealth, region, gender and ethnicity are bad for growth. The report goes on to add what we already knew, namely, that such disparities are bad for democracy, as well as bad for social cohesion.

Thirdly, I would target corruption as a scourge that undermines both the rule of law and social justice. Corruption — the exploitation of a position of influence for private benefit — is a serious obstacle to development. It erodes the foundations of democracy and of viable economic structures. Our own experience shows that a value base that promotes moderation, personal restraint and the common good tends to check corruption. The same goes for legislative, judicial and administrative structures that closely monitor and guard against abuses of power. Other factors contributing to a low level of corruption include the prominence of women in political decision-making and low income disparities within the population. Low corruption often correlates with high economic competitiveness and increased efficiency in governance. I would strongly urge the United Nations and the United Nations system as a whole to redouble their efforts to help Member States fight corruption. It is of the essence if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Fourthly, on the subject of the environment, I would stress the complementarity of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the MDGs. Goal 7, to ensure environmental sustainability, is essential for achieving other MDGs on poverty, health, education and gender equality. The protection and sustainable management of the natural resource base is necessary for development and poverty eradication. All developed countries need to make substantive efforts to prevent the destruction of ecosystems, inter alia, through the promotion of sustainable production and consumption.

Those challenges cannot be successfully met without effectively tackling the challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss. To that end, we need to promote energy efficiency, the conservation and wider use of alternative energy sources and technological innovation. We wish to see a rapid initiation of negotiations to develop a more inclusive — and in the longer term more effective — international framework for climate change beyond 2012.

We also need a more coherent institutional framework for international environmental governance. As the European Union has previously stated, Finland believes that the creation of a new United Nations specialized agency for the environment — based on the United Nations Environment Programme, but with a revised and strengthened mandate — would best serve that end.

The fifth issue I would like to highlight is that of small arms and light weapons, which — like corruption — was identified as one of the priority areas of the Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy. That Process, which culminated two weeks ago in the Helsinki Conference, was tasked with coming up with concrete proposals on how to enhance human security across the globe. Reckless trade and badly guarded stockpiles have led to a world awash in small arms and light weapons, where human rights are violated, humanitarian aid looted and economic development halted — at gunpoint.

Finland has also called for an end to irresponsible arms trading through better international regulation. The main ideas are to make all arms transfers fully transparent and to establish universally accepted criteria for them. We are of the opinion that those

criteria should be strictly enforced, legally binding and firmly founded on human rights considerations. That is why we have supported the initiative to negotiate an arms trade treaty. It is high time to bring the rule of law to the international arms trade.

Last but not least, I would join those who have stressed the need for the United Nations to take prompt action towards further management reform. This is an issue which cannot wait, as the very credibility of the Organization is at stake. In the light of recent events related to the Organization, if there is a perception among the public that it is business as usual at the United Nations, we risk undermining the support that the Organization enjoys. It is therefore obvious that an unreformed Organization would be less, not more, relevant, and less, not more, effective. We must stress the rule of law and good governance internally within the United Nations, just as we stress it externally.

Reaching common positions and devising joint action at the international level requires patience and persistence, and a willingness to take practical and pragmatic steps. If such an approach is taken, we are confident that the sixtieth session of the General Assembly will be a success.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alfred Capelle, chairman of the delegation of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Mr. Capelle (Marshall Islands): I wish to extend warm greetings of *iokwe* from the people of the Marshall Islands as we gather for the sixtieth session of the Assembly. I am honoured to speak on behalf of President Kessai H. Note, who had to leave New York ahead of schedule due to an urgent matter at home.

Sixty years have passed since a visionary course of action was charted recognizing that freedom, justice and peace in the world are based on the inherent dignity, equality and inalienable rights of all. The world has felt the direct impact of the United Nations, and we have good reason to be grateful. Critics notwithstanding, our Organization has served the global community and has touched every aspect of our lives.

The Marshall Islands is grateful for the United Nations, for without it, how could a small remote island nation express its concerns, be heard, and be on common ground with the rich and powerful?

Five years after we made a unanimous commitment to peace, liberty and sustainable development, we have gathered here again to take concrete measures. We approved last Friday an instrument that the Secretariat and the General Assembly can build upon in streamlining the United Nations and in meeting the many new challenges of the twenty-first century.

All aspects of life in the Marshall Islands have been profoundly affected by its extraordinary history, which encompasses a Pacific war and the legacy of nuclear testing. Its remoteness, size and vulnerability continue to limit opportunities for the economic growth of the Marshall Islands. In finding ways to work together for the betterment of the population, traditional leaders and representatives of our national and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and private and public sectors convened last month in a special retreat — an opportunity for everyone involved to build trust and to think and work together in crafting a shared vision that can and will ensure the prosperity of the people. We continue to move beyond words to action.

We continue also to engage actively in regional activities in the Pacific, including through our regional organizations, such as the Pacific Islands Forum. A great deal of work has been done in the development of the Pacific Plan, a strategy for broader regional cooperation based on the key goals of economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security. The Plan will be presented to Forum leaders when they meet next month. It will also be discussed at our small island States meeting, which the Marshall Islands chairs.

In the international arena, we continue to reaffirm our solidarity with the Alliance of Small Island States. We are grateful for the support of the General Assembly in its endorsement of the Declaration and Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted at the Mauritius International Meeting last January. The Strategy requires quick and practical action to address the unique challenges facing the sustainable development of small island developing States.

The Marshall Islands' small resource base, limited market access, fragile environment, vulnerability to climate change and variability, as well

as the high costs of energy, along with issues related to infrastructure, transportation and communications, are among the many constraints we face within the existing international economic environment. Our vulnerability to environmental and economic events continues to impede our opportunities for development.

Our development efforts will be in vain if the results are reversed by continued degradation of the environment and depletion of natural resources.

We are pleased that the Kyoto Protocol has now entered into force. However, some major emitters remain outside of it. A more inclusive international framework needs to be developed for stabilizing greenhouse-gas emissions beyond 2012, with broader participation by all major emitters — developed and developing countries.

Climate change is a serious and long-term challenge that has the potential to affect every part of the world. It is time to undertake concrete actions and measures at all levels. In that context, we welcome the progress made in terms of the establishment and development of an all-hazard early warning system.

United Nations international efforts were very swift and effective in the wake of the devastating tsunami in the Indian Ocean and, more recently, following Hurricane Katrina in the southern United States. We hope that the international community will not act so humanely only in the aftermath of natural disasters but also in the context of the far less dramatic, but no less crucial global actions needed to mitigate climate change and arrest sea-level rise before it is too late to act and the people of the Marshall Islands and others become environmental refugees.

On health issues, the Marshall Islands continues to face the challenges associated in dealing with major diseases such as diabetes, influenza, bird flu, SARS and the risk of the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Despite the difficulties we face in addressing these challenges, we are proud of, and grateful for, the involvement of the traditional leadership, which has contributed to the substantial progress made at the local and national levels.

We are in the final stages of completing the HIV/AIDS National Strategic Plan. Our ambition to carry out this task is strong, but we cannot do it alone. The support of the international community is extremely important to help build our capacity; to strengthen our human resources; to help us implement effective public education programmes that will encourage behavioural change among the high-risk groups in our population; and to provide technical assistance to facilitate prompt access to the Global Fund and other financial sources to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, diabetes and malaria.

We have integrated family planning and maternal and child health programmes into reproductive health services, and we fully support the initiatives on accessibility to reproductive health services under the Millennium Development Goals.

On sustainable development, the Marshall Islands has established a task force to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are fully integrated into our national strategy. One challenge we continue to face is the need for human and technical resources, but, despite that and other challenges, we are determined to work towards achieving the Goals.

During this, the first policy year of its first implementation cycle, we recognize the important precedent set by the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development as to how future cycles could be conducted and what type of outcomes could be expected. The Marshall Islands is working hard to improve access to freshwater, develop environmentally responsible waste management systems and provide affordable and renewable energy sources. Our programme would be impossible without the continued support of the international community and development partners, for which we are always grateful.

One issue that continues to haunt the people of the Marshall Islands is the effects of nuclear weapons testing. When people in most parts of the world talk about nuclear devastation, they tend to think of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, few are aware that the Marshall Islands experienced the equivalent of 1.6 Hiroshima-sized bombs every day during the 12 years that numerous nuclear weapons were detonated and tested in our country. Interestingly, this took place while the Marshall Islands was part of the United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

We would like to emphasize the need for full resolution of this issue based on the changed circumstances that have come to light and the new information gathered from recent scientific and medical studies on radiological safety, clean-up and the

malignant effects of radiation on health. I call on the international community to support the Marshall Islands in this endeavour.

The Marshall Islands has experienced the far-reaching and invasive effects of a nuclear testing programme on the most intimate and personal levels: from home islands no longer inhabitable to the illness and death of many of our friends and families. We can prepare our health system to deal with this burden, but we can never remedy the human and emotional toll that this has had and continues to have on us as individuals, families, communities and as a nation.

Concerning disarmament and non-proliferation, we believe that sustainable peace and development will not be achieved without major steps towards disarmament. Reiterating our firm commitment to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we look forward to strengthening its implementation, including through future review conferences.

As a nation whose single most important productive sector and key export are its fisheries, the state of the world's oceans and fish stocks and how these vital resources are being exploited remain our utmost concern. We recognize the importance of the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. We remain seriously concerned about instances of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing within our exclusive economic zone. The continued assistance of the international community is needed in building capacity for monitoring and surveillance in this regard.

The global threat the world faces today is a challenge of a different nature from anything we have had to deal with before. We recognize how poverty, environmental degradation and the abuse of human rights undermine human security. We welcome the recent adoption of the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. We continue to cooperate closely within the Pacific region to ensure that effective regional action is taken to combat threats to our peace and security. We have taken steps to combat money-laundering and the financing of terrorism and to implement the twelve core anti-terrorism conventions and relevant Security Council resolutions. In our global effort to counter terrorism, agreeing on the definition of terrorism is one of the many issues that requires serious consideration and resolution.

Concerning the Middle East peace process, we commend the determination and strong resolve of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in his effort to reinvigorate the Middle East peace process by fulfilling Israel's pledge to withdraw from the Gaza Strip.

Concerning the International Criminal Court, we welcome its progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Darfur situations. We are also pleased with the entry into force of the agreement between the International Criminal Court and the United Nations. We continue to call on all States to strengthen the rule of law around the world by ratifying the Rome Statute governing that Court.

Bearing in mind the phrase "we the peoples" in the Preamble to the Charter, Marshall Islands believes that if the United Nations adheres to the principles of universality and self-determination, it must not exclude the 23 million people of the free, democratic and independent nation of Taiwan. As a free and prosperous country, Taiwan has much to contribute to the peace and security of the Western Pacific, and we reiterate our full support for the ongoing quest of the people of Taiwan to be granted membership in this family of nations. Denying membership to a free and democratic nation and condoning the presence of repressive States is a flagrant violation of basic democratic principles.

In a world divided by chasms between the rich and the poor, between the powerful and the powerless, differences of interest are certain to shape all our reform efforts and perpetuate a contradictory and divided Organization. We share the aspirations of a United Nations guided by the following values and principles: belief in multilateral cooperation, the imperative of prevention, respect for the rule of law and human rights, solidarity with the poor and suffering, concern for the rights of women and the children of the world and their future, and for the health of Planet Earth.

We reiterate our support for reform and expansion of the Security Council, using a criteria-based approach based on factors such as economic size, population, commitment to democracy and human rights, financial contribution to the United Nations, contributions to peacekeeping and record on counter-terrorism and non-proliferation.

The Marshall Islands will continue to participate in this session's important debates on how to reform and strengthen the United Nations as an institution and how to ensure that it effectively addresses the threats and challenges of the twenty-first century. We assure you of our full cooperation towards the goal of a strong, effective and accountable Organization.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Enrique Berruga, chairman of the delegation of the United Mexican States.

Mr. Berruga (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): During the past year, we, the Member States, embarked upon a reform process without precedent in the history of our Organization. The international community became fully aware of the need to transform the United Nations in order better to meet the threats and challenges of our time. Although significant progress was made, we have not yet achieved the expected goals.

The political and intellectual contributions put forth by the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, the Secretary-General's Report "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005), the United Nations Millennium Project report and the input provided by the Group of Friends for the Reform of the United Nations are, among others, important efforts that have guided our discussions aimed at defining the future of our Organization. Now, our task is to take stock of the lessons learned, of the good and the bad, in order to make this sixtieth session the year of the United Nations reform.

The outcome document adopted by heads of State and Government during this summit is a point of departure. It is not yet the final result. It should be seen as the architecture that will lead us in the building of the new United Nations. It is crucial that we keep the reform momentum alive and implement as soon as possible the changes demanded by the international community and our Governments.

In Mexico's opinion, there are three key aspects among the lessons learned that need to be taken into consideration during the work of this sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

First, reform of the system must be comprehensive. It will be very damaging, futile and inadequate if we decide to sacrifice a comprehensive approach by focusing our efforts on just one aspect of the reform. A great deal of the frustration stemming from the summit's outcome occurred because of the extensive attention and time given to reform of the Security Council. We cannot deny the importance of this issue, but we should not hold the whole reform process hostage to the exclusive discussion of one single item.

Throughout the long days of discussion prior to the summit, it became evident that the issues which aroused interest and triggered concern were those such as human rights, development, the fight against terrorism, the environment, the social agenda and management reform. It is much clearer today than it was two weeks ago that the United Nations inevitably needs to make simultaneous headway on those issues of priority for the international community.

Secondly, the most effective means of advancing the reform process lies in genuine negotiations open to all interested States, with agreed timelines for both adoption and implementation of the commitments reached. All delegations witnessed that, in the last three weeks prior to the summit, we were able to make more and faster progress than during the previous long months of consultations and speeches. The summit acted as a catalyst for serious and committed intergovernmental negotiations. Then we were finally able to perceive with the required precision each Member State's limits and margins of flexibility. In the light of that experience, we must turn to negotiations as the most productive working method.

Thirdly, in order to gain relevance and effectiveness, the United Nations institutional structures should adapt to real global problems and not the other way around. Otherwise, we could be in the absurd situation of building institutions pleasing to high political and diplomatic circles but very disappointing to the societies they are meant to serve.

Discussions on the new Human Rights Council illustrate that kind of failing. The number of members has received far more attention than the mandates and tasks it should carry out in order to promote human dignity. It is urgent that this be reversed.

Mr. Eliasson, you will be presiding over a very unusual General Assembly session. Fruitless efforts have been made for years to find the formulas to revitalize the highest globally representative organ. Today, driven by the winds of reform and the need to ease the Organization's sense of crisis, the General

Assembly has rare momentum to steer the future course of the United Nations. This is where major agreements could be reached and where States' commitments will be recorded. Mexico is fully confident that, during your presidency, the General Assembly will grow stronger as the main political forum for major global decision-making.

As stated by the President of Mexico at the recent summit (*see A/60/PV.4*), we are at the starting point, not at the finish line. Our task is incomplete, and it is urgent to establish a Peacebuilding Commission to put into practice the concept of the "responsibility to protect", to establish a Human Rights Council that could make an immediate difference vis-à-vis the weaknesses and double standards that have tarnished the reputation of the Commission on Human Rights; to begin negotiations on reform of the Security Council, with the common purpose of putting in place the best possible collective security system, one that can effectively face today's major threats.

Development continues to be a priority among the aspirations and concerns on the global agenda. Mexico has made particularly important efforts in this realm. The International Conference on Financing for Development, held in the Mexican city of Monterrey, became a watershed in our approach to that subject. A partnership between rich and developing countries was forged for the first time ever, with the purpose of fighting poverty head-on and defining financial targets and timetables in that fight. We therefore particularly appreciate the decision of those developed countries that have announced precise timetables and levels of their gross national product to be allocated for official development assistance. We reiterate our call to the rest of the economic Powers to move in that direction, and we urge the developing countries to present, as soon as possible, their own national strategies to ensure that they can access those resources. It is crucial that all parties fully meet their commitments. We cannot allow ourselves to go backwards in this connection.

The President of Mexico has asked me to put on record our disappointment at the fact that the summit's outcome document did not include a section on disarmament and non-proliferation. My delegation will join forces with other interested member States to restore this sensitive issue to the United Nations agenda.

For Mexico, which last April had the honour of hosting the first Conference of States Parties and Signatories of Treaties That Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, disarmament and non-proliferation issues are a top priority on our international agenda. Because of this, and because of the hazardous international scenario we have experienced in recent weeks, we consider it urgent to find a way to end the paralysis faced by the multilateral forums dealing with this matter.

Likewise, Mexico attaches great importance to the agreement reached during the summit to finalize a comprehensive convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. We urge all Member States and Observers to continue their negotiations with a view to making sure that this instrument is adopted by the General Assembly during its current session.

Finally, I would like to comments on the section of the outcome document dealing with the rule of law. The rule of law in international relations is a rational preventive tool for settling disputes. The United Nations legal machinery constitutes an ally of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security. Based on the comprehensive reform promoted by my country, we deem it necessary for States to reinforce their commitment to strengthening the International Court of Justice in a substantive way.

Mexico will remain a firm promoter of United Nations reform and of seeking multilateral solutions to address the world's major problems. Through the Group of Friends for United Nations Reform, and during this critical year in the life of our Organization, we will go on putting forward proposals and mechanisms to implement decisions. In this regard, I would like to echo President Fox's appreciation to his counterparts from Algeria, Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Germany, Japan, Kenya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, Spain and Sweden for their intelligent and constructive contribution to the reform process. The diversity of views within the Group and the decision to focus on delivering concrete proposals to solve the problems of the United Nations, as well as those of the world, demonstrate that it is indeed feasible to reach agreements and translate them into action. We are confident that this spirit will spread throughout the membership of the United Nations, and that the sixtieth session will truly mark the beginning of the second phase in the life of our Organization.

The President: I thank the chairman of the delegation of Mexico for his contributions to our important work ahead, following up the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

I now call on our last speaker for this morning, His Excellency Archbishop Celestino Migliore, chairman of the delegation of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): The summit marking the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations is over, but to bring it to completion our work here must build upon its outcome document (resolution 60/1) so as to fulfil the agreed package of reforms with vision and determination. The Holy See, having followed the outcome document's development closely, welcomes much of what is proposed. However, the lack of consensus on arms control and non-proliferation issues is regrettable.

I should also like to add at the outset that the Holy See understands the references to both the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development and the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, and to reproductive health found in paragraphs 57 (g), 58 and 58 (c) in the sense that it set out in its reservations and statements of interpretation at those Conferences, that is, as applying to a holistic concept of health that does not consider abortion or access to abortion as a dimension of those terms. These caveats aside, the document is a basis for implementation and ongoing discussions on United Nations reform.

Due to the human tragedies of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, the "responsibility to protect", as reflected in the outcome document, has, for humanitarian reasons, gained more acceptance. Its definitive legal formulation could greatly contribute to the enrichment not only of international law but also of sincere solidarity among nations. To identify carefully and honestly the causes of such man-made disasters is indispensable to creating more timely prevention measures. Protection of those in distress and assistance to them go hand in hand with lucid analysis and public awareness of the causes of humanitarian crises.

The silence of the outcome document regarding disarmament and non-proliferation is worrying. Nuclear armament is simply devastating for people and for the environment; it destroys people's lives and the substratum of every decent economy. We therefore must insist upon nuclear non-proliferation. Likewise, we must insist on complete nuclear disarmament and a strengthened International Atomic Energy Agency verification and safeguards system. No effort should be spared to discourage not only the production of nuclear weapons but also any trade or exchange in such materials.

Of course, a secure world will not just be free of the menace of war; it will be one where sustainable human development is also assured, through sound global governance. But, while global governance has a logic of its own, it lacks its own ethics, something which the world's nations must supply. We live in an interdependent but fragile society and, in many places, people's best interests are not served well. I should like to mention here but three specific areas of ethical challenge in this regard: solidarity with the poor, the promotion of the common good, and a sustainable environment.

Small gains made in this last area remain under risk from, among other things, climate change, new diseases, the irresponsible destruction of forests, water pollution, depletion of fish stocks, the destruction of global commons such as the oceans, and so on. It is estimated that 15 out of 24 essential services provided by ecosystems are being used unsustainably. The enormity of today's environmental challenge obliges us to rethink our notions of interdependence, global cooperation and our common responsibility for the stewardship of the planet. Differences on how to address challenges should not stop agreement on the identification of specific environmental threats and common measures to tackle them.

Another core principle needs to be set out in the form of the proper devolution of power to local levels to ensure greater effectiveness and accountability, known also as subsidiarity. The application of this principle would foster a genuine respect for the rights of nations and for the significance of culture, balancing particularism and universalism. Global governance also has to address the democracy deficit in order to ensure globalization without marginalization.

In this context, the United Nations becomes the projection of the hope for peace and well-being in the world. To fulfil this high calling, which is proper to the Organization's nature and function, will require clear characteristics of leadership, the courage of the Organization and those who are part of it and a common vision for its leaders, collaborators and interlocutors at every level, so that they may succeed in finding the right road to achieve the goals in view.

On the subject of the Human Rights Council, a reform that improves upon the present arrangements is to be welcomed. International law and its institutions are vital for the application and enforcement of human rights. Likewise, we should not lose sight of the importance that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights attaches to the incorporation of its principles into national law and to education in fostering a rights-respecting culture. Promotion and enforcement of human rights at the national level and constant attention to education will continue to be indispensable to allow those rights to flourish in the new system.

The international community, the happy possessor of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights since 1948, appears, however, in the meantime to have forgotten that not only essential human rights but also human duties underpin the Declaration. These duties establish the framework in which our rights are contained, so that the latter are not simply exercised upon a whim. The reference to duties in the Universal Declaration reminds us that rights usually entail responsibilities; and that if we expect our own rights to be respected, we must respect the rights of others. Indeed, the Declaration's recognition of the interdependence of rights and duties was one of the key features that enabled it to win consensus from nations East and West, North and South. Today, when globalization has rendered us more interdependent than ever, a greater sense of universal human duties would benefit the cause of peace, because awareness of our mutual responsibility acknowledges duties as being essential to a social order which does not depend upon the will or the power of any individual or group.

The question has resurfaced of how there can be universal rights in view of the diversity among cultures. Some maintain that all rights are culturally relative; others claim that universal rights are just instruments of a given cultural imperialism; and some believe the gulf between those two positions cannot be bridged. My delegation, however, shares the faith of the principal framers of the Universal Declaration, that certain values are so fundamental that they can find support in the moral and philosophical traditions of cultures. For that reason, such universal principles or basic human rights are undeniable. In their essential core they have to be universally recognized and must be operative *erga omnes*. To reject the idea that basic rights are relative, however, does not require one to reject a legitimate pluralism in their implementation. Quite the contrary, for pluralism is the only way to move beyond the sterile relativism-imperialism debate.

The Holy See, on the basis of its own long experience in seeing how a common core of principles can take root and flourish in vastly different cultures, affirms the wisdom of the drafters of the Universal Declaration in this respect. The framework they fashioned is flexible enough to allow for differences in emphasis and implementation, but not so malleable as to permit any basic human right to be completely eclipsed or unnecessarily subordinated for the sake of other rights. Regrettably, the legitimately pluralist approach to basic rights is sometimes forgotten, but it must be retrieved if we are to avoid a top-down, homogenizing vision of human rights.

In the wake of recent acts of terrible violence, calls have come from various quarters to promote greater understanding among religions, cultures and civilizations. The Holy See supports the initiatives in the field of interfaith cooperation and dialogue among civilizations, especially where, in the spirit of their reference to and reliance on God, they form consciences, foster common moral values and promote intercultural understanding and proactive commitments. Those tasks require continued evaluation with regard to motivation, policies, laws and institutions. It is the mission of civil and religious leaders to be a source of inspiration, support and guidance for all people of good will who strive towards sustainable peace.

The Holy See also understands that there is a particular type of interreligious dialogue in which religious representatives and their constituents engage in discussion on the theological and spiritual tenets of their respective religions and exchange positive experiences with a view to promoting mutual understanding and respect among all. That type of dialogue does not appear to be part of the United Nations Charter and is therefore better left to religious experts and appropriate representatives of religions. Nevertheless, the United Nations can make a valid and important contribution to interfaith cooperation for peace and development.

In concluding, I should like to add a word of acknowledgement of the important contribution that the United Nations staff makes to the Organization in its efforts to promote harmony and solidarity among peoples. Likewise, I should like to express once again to you, Sir, the best wishes and support of my delegation as you look ahead to an important and fruitful presidency of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.